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RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 2089  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MTS, DS/IP/EAP, DS/DSS, INR/EAP and INL  
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SUBJECT: FRENCH NATIONAL KIDNAPPED IN NORTH ACEH

¶1. (SBU) Summary. A French national consultant for the World Bank and his Indonesian driver were kidnapped and held by a group calling themselves Sword Force in the Sawang subdistrict of North Aceh Regency on the early afternoon of September 23. After repeated threats to their lives at sword point, and having the French national's ATM card drained, both victims were eventually released on the evening of September 23 near the North Aceh city of Bireun. This represents the most serious security incident involving foreign nationals working for international organizations in Aceh since the beginning of post-tsunami reconstruction efforts in 2005. End Summary.

#### Event Chronology

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(Note: the account in paras 2-4 below is a compilation of Morell's own recounting and initial verification of details conducted by Aceh security sources. End Note)

¶2. (SBU) At 1:00PM local time on September 23 World Bank senior consultant Adrian Morell responsible for the regular Aceh Conflict Monitoring Updates published by the group traveled to Sawang in order to meet with the 'Sword Force' group that had previously threatened World Bank local staff conducting a routine multi-stakeholder review of World Bank programs in Aceh. Shortly after the start of the meeting 5 men arrived and, joining the original group, threatened Morell and his driver at sword point, tied them up, and blindfolded them before driving them in their World Bank vehicle into the jungle. No firearms were used or in evidence at any time during the kidnapping.

¶3. (SBU) The group of 10 men who had taken Morell and his driver hostage repeatedly threatened to behead them and stated a list of grievances against the World Bank and organizations involved in the Aceh peace process including NGO InterPeace, as well as mentioning their desire to kidnap a Spanish International Commission of the Red Cross (ICRC) staff member in the future. They initially demanded 5 billion Rupiah (USD 540,000) from Morell as ransom from the World Bank and when he explained that the World Bank would not ransom him they took his ATM card and went to nearby Lhoksumawe where they drained 3,000 dollars cash from his bank account and transferred additional funds to other local accounts of their associates.

¶4. (SBU) According to Morell, he was finally able to convince the remaining kidnappers to release him after explaining the gravity of

the situation and likely government reaction to his continued absence. The group holding him in the jungle drove him and his driver to Bireun city in North Aceh by motorbike, where he was released at 10:30PM on September 23. He and his driver took a public bus back to Banda Aceh that night and reported the case to the police in Banda Aceh the next day. The vehicle remains missing and the assailants are still at large.

#### Reaction

15. (SBU) The U.S. Mission in Indonesia is issuing a warden message to all Americans urging them to avoid the Sawang subdistrict and coordinate any planned travel in the surrounding area with local authorities. According to BRR (Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) Safety Team Advisor Stephen Almsteier, the World Bank has suspended all internal Aceh travel and the United Nations has stopped all travel outside the capital in Banda Aceh. The international NGO community in Aceh clearly views this event as a serious impediment to their operations and freedom of movement in Aceh. The BRR Safety Team is counseling less drastic measures and has advised NGOs to avoid the Sawang subdistrict and drive straight through on main roads during daylight hours if traveling in the area is necessary. Other local NGOs contacted by USAID's Aceh Reconstruction Office on September 26 are pursuing a "lay low" attitude but have not issued the same type of wide-ranging travel restrictions to their staff as the World Bank and UN.

16. (SBU) In a conversation with Consulate Medan on September 26 the local Indonesian military commander responsible for Sawang, Colonel Eko, indicated to Medan staff that the group is currently under surveillance but that since this has been deemed a criminal manner

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the police will take the lead in the investigation. He added that the military has confirmed that the Sword Force does not apparently have any firearms in their possession. Eko also confirmed that the military and law enforcement forces in place in North Aceh see this incident as crossing an unacceptable line and police are reviewing ATM camera footage and investigating the case.

#### Background on 'Sword Force'

17. (SBU) The "Badrudin Group", now calling themselves "Sword Force", was based on the former Aceh Freedom Movement (GAM) Muslim cleric (Imam) in Sawang named Badruddin, a young religious leader sympathetic to GAM who became the Imam for the GAM base camp in Sawang in 2001. Due to a host of local grievances he and his group refused to recognize the peace agreement and Helsinki MoU in 2005 and eventually fell out with GAM. Badruddin's daughter was killed during an attack on their home in June of 2007 by unknown assailants. Badruddin and his wife were attacked again in front of their home in December of 2007 by a group of masked men and both killed on the scene.

18. (SBU) Local media reports from August 15 reported a number of green flags with a star and crescent symbol, with two swords and Arabic script with the words 'Allahu Akbar' (God is Great) were put up in Sawang district by Sword Force and later taken down by police on August 9. Young people interviewed by the media in Aceh as part of the story, who claimed to be followers of Badruddin, are now grouping themselves into Sword Force and said they would continue their agitation.

19. (SBU) Neither Badruddin nor his men received the reintegration payments other ex-GAM received. Prior to his death last year, Badruddin was implicated in several high-profile property crimes including against INGOs. Badruddin's group reportedly uses the fact that they didn't get the reintegration cash as an excuse to take what they want. The targeting of the World Bank during this kidnapping may have been begun as a plan to extort money from the INGO.

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